

# COMBATING POSTHARVEST LOSS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GLOBAL HUNGER



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**B**y the year 2050, the world population is expected to reach 9 billion people, and demand for food will increase by 60 percent, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. Increasing food production is not enough. Roughly one-third of the food produced in the world goes to waste – a staggering 1.3 billion tons every year. In the fight against global hunger, we must also address postharvest loss.

## WHAT IS POSTHARVEST LOSS?

Postharvest loss is collective food loss along the production chain, from harvest and handling, to storage and processing, to packing and transportation.

## THE CHALLENGE

Total crop loss is difficult to measure because it depends upon a variety of factors, including the type of crop, the weather, and the region. In low-income countries, most food is lost well before reaching the consumer.

- In India, it is estimated that nearly 30 percent of produce is lost.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, the annual value of grain loss is estimated at \$4 billion – enough to feed 48 million people for one year.

## CAUSES OF POSTHARVEST LOSS

- *Poor transportation.* Food transported in open, unrefrigerated trucks can lead to food loss, infestation, and rot.
- *Lack of storage and processing equipment.* Without proper storage and processing equipment, food can be lost to mold, pests, and rot.
- *Limited access to credit.* If farmers are not able to invest in adequate drying and storage equipment, their ability to reduce postharvest loss will be limited.

## U.S. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO REDUCE POSTHARVEST LOSS

The public and private sectors are working together to ensure that farmers in developing countries have the necessary tools and infrastructure to reduce postharvest loss:

- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a call for proposals to link renewable energy technologies with farmers and agribusiness in low-income countries, such as opportunities to improve food processing and storage.
- USAID, DuPont and the Government of Ethiopia are partnering to help smallholder farmers in Ethiopia improve their maize production, in part by helping them prevent postharvest loss.

## FEED THE FUTURE

Feed the Future is President Obama's global hunger and food security initiative and the U.S. government's flagship initiative to reduce global hunger and poverty, including postharvest loss.

- Focusing on smallholder farmers, Feed the Future supports countries in developing their own agriculture sectors to generate opportunities for economic growth and trade, which help reduce poverty and hunger.
- The initiative supports the food security priorities of our host countries, promoting collaboration at the U.S. domestic and international levels. It focuses on women as part of the solution, engages with the private sector and civil society, and advances big ideas through research and innovation.
- By helping create economic opportunities in developing countries, these collaborative food security efforts generate economic growth and promote global stability.

For additional information:

U.S. Department of State  
Office of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Textile Trade Affairs  
<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/tpp/abt/postharvest/index.htm>

Feed the Future  
<http://www.feedthefuture.gov/>